FOWL
FEATHERED
REVIEW
no265

FOWL FEATHERED REVIEW

AEROSTATIC DOSSIER // Δ-77.31(b) / KNOCK INDEX ∴ 4:13:4∞
Drifted as Utility Residue, Declared Sufficient About the Asked (Collected Under Practical Conditions)

FOWL FEATHERED REVIEW
A Journal of Administrative Gothic & Bricolage World-Building
Published at irregular intervals from Bangor, Maine.

Fowl Feathered Review is devoted to Administrative Gothic and Bricolage World-Building.

We publish fiction, poetry, essays, visual art, invented scholarship, municipal folklore, impossible ethnographies, neighborhood cosmologies, documentary fantasies, archival recoveries, procedural myths, and literary artifacts assembled from the overlooked machinery of ordinary life.

Our interest lies less in inventing new worlds than in discovering the hidden architecture already

embedded within this one. We believe a city is composed not only of streets and buildings, but of maintenance corridors, filing cabinets, historical societies, obsolete technologies, misplaced inventories, volunteer committees, rumor, weather, memory, and paperwork that has quietly outlived its original purpose.

We are drawn to stories that emerge from local history, civic infrastructure, institutional language, vernacular knowledge, found objects, forgotten manuals, field guides, maps, radio broadcasts, View-Masters, storefronts, zoning disputes, maintenance logs, discarded catalogs, public notices, and neighborhood traditions. The marvelous should arrive through documentation rather than proclamation.

The fantastic need not descend from another universe. It may already be waiting in a basement archive, a public library vertical file, a county ledger, an abandoned utility tunnel, or the handwritten annotations in a manual nobody has checked out since 1978.

We admire careful observation, literary playfulness, serious nonsense, comic precision, scholarly invention, and worlds assembled through accumulation rather than exposition. We encourage work that treats bureaucracy as folklore,

infrastructure as mythology, and ordinary places as inexhaustible sources of wonder.
Our guiding assumption is simple:

The archive is a neighborhood.

The neighborhood is a forest.

Editorial Principle

No dragons.

More zoning boards.

No chosen ones.

More maintenance departments.

No secret kingdoms.

More historical societies.

The impossible should always arrive with supporting documentation.

We do not curate in the modern sense. We maintain instead an Offenrückraum (open-back space), in which items may enter, settle, or misfile themselves.

Participants (hereafter: “important locals”) are those who exhibit Dauerträgheit—a useful persistence

under minor strain. Fragility is not prohibited, but it is structurally unsupported.

Any submission that appears to strive toward “Art” in the self-declarative sense will be reassigned to a more stable function (e.g., table-leveling, draft-blocking, oil-absorption).
On the Operation of Source-Engines (Always in Partial Motion)

Warenregisterbruch (Arcade Index Condition)

Fragments are extracted from catalogs, labels, packaging, and signage. Context is removed. Adjacency is reassigned. Authority increases in proportion to specificity, regardless of accuracy.

Protokollhäufigung (Dossier Stack Condition)

Records accumulate: maintenance notes, claims, timestamps. Gaps are preserved. Contradictions are not resolved. A sequence may appear, but closure is considered a filing error.

Randbemerkungsdrift (False Commentator Condition)

Functional texts (manuals, glossaries, guides) are annotated beyond their tolerance. Explanations become misaligned. Confidence is retained.
Anweisungsschnitt (Cut-Up Recorder Condition)

Instruction-language is segmented and recombined. Repetition introduces rhythm. Meaning is reduced until only procedure-residue remains.

All outputs must retain Rückverfolgbarkeit (trace-feel): the impression that the fragment could be located again in some drawer, binder, or glove compartment.

Where this condition fails, the material is considered decorative and is removed.

A recurring sonic marker—transcribed provisionally as “dor”—is permitted to enter any layer. Its function remains under study.

On Repurposing (Important Clarification)

All submitted materials enter a Weiterverwendungskreis (cycle of further use).

Possible outcomes include:

Inclusion as fragment within a larger construct

Mislabeling and redistribution

Use as structural support (physical or textual)

Reduction to residue for future recombination

Authors retain attribution only in the lowest archival sense. Function supersedes origin.

The current operational formula is recorded as:

$$[(\mathrm{DOR} \times 7)^2 + 11\mathrm{B}] \div \Sigma(\text{Loose Matter})$$

$$= 0.004 \text{ Useful Units}$$

Verification remains impossible due to kettle interference and unresolved parking-lot acoustics.

Delivery

Materials may be delivered, transmitted, or misplaced. Retrieval is opportunistic. Loss is considered a form of delayed submission.

LISTEN — OBSERVE
MISFILE — REPEAT
BE USEFUL
STAY LOOSE
NO LIMITS
NO END

CANNIBALIZE YOUR CANNOLI
CANNIBALIZE TAP DANCING IN THE RAIN
CANNIBALIZE YOUR INSTANT RECALL
CANNIBALIZE YOUR BIOLOGICAL TIME CLOCK

The Staff (Sink-Custodians / Function-Bearers)

Virgil Kay: Final Arbiter. Currently engaged in the classification of falling bakery items under aerodynamic variance. Maintains decision authority, though criteria are mobile.

Silent Bill: Overseer of Tactical Non-Sequiturs. Executes Satzabbruchhandlung (sentence-break action) by leaving mid-utterance. This is considered a valid editorial intervention.

Unkie Bob: Assigned to Casual Entropy. No longer dismantles structures directly; instead applies insufficient fastening (Lockerbefestigung), allowing failure to emerge without announcement.

The Unnamed Dishwasher: Not recorded in official listings. Present regardless. Performs continuous surface-restoration under high focus. Functions as Kerntriebwerk (core engine). Prolonged observation is discouraged.

“Non ignara mali, miseris succerrere disco.”
— Virgil

Fowl Feathered Review

Treasury Cycle • Bangor Continuum Office • Issue ∞

REGISTRY OF MORTALITY & MOBILITY

Eternal Ledger / Nothing Occurs Once

City of Bangor
Treasury Office

All Times • All Versions
All Streets • All Layers

Docket No.
1911.1964.2026.
∞

Bangor, Maine
All Eras Simultaneous

City of Bangor — Continuously True — Non-Linear Seal ★

Compiled Simultaneously by Three Clerks of Time & City

Vincent of Beauvais
Temporal Index Clerk of Bangor

Author of the *Mirror of the World (and Municipal Supplements)*

Jacobus de Voragine
Restyler of Living Saints & Ongoing Events

Compiler of the *Golden Legend* (and Sidewalk Hagiographies)

Rashid al-Din Hamadani
Nonlinear Census Authority of Bangor

Historian of Worlds (and Their Overlapping *Municipalities*)

All entries co-signed under the doctrine: Nothing Here Occurs Once

I. On the Status of the Subject
(Who is also already filed elsewhere)

The subject enters City Hall, but also does not enter City Hall.

In one register, they are present.
In another, they are still approaching.
In a third, they have already left and are being reviewed for motion compliance.
They declare:
"Temporary in essence, ambulatory in function."

Vincent: *All functions are temporary. Essence is an indexing error.*

Jacobus: *The walker is always canonized mid-step.*

Rashid: *This person exists in at least three municipal centuries simultaneously.*

II. Registry of Mortality
(Mortality as distributed file)

Mortality is not recorded as an event.
It is filed as a recurring document with multiple timestamps.
— the subject is dead in 1914 (Opera House fire record layer)
— alive in 1964 (Urban Renewal testimony layer)
— unverified but walking in 2026 (current pedestrian index layer)
— and absent in a version of Bangor that has already been replaced by parking infrastructure

Jacobus: *Sainthood is what happens when death forgets which version it belongs to.*

Vincent: *Death is not an endpoint; it is a cross-reference.*

Rashid: *Mortality is a disagreement between archives.*

Virgil Kay (Editor Rooster China Wok Habitué) Stamps:
MORTALITY: SIMULTANEOUSLY ACTIVE / INACTIVE / RECURSIVE

III. Registry of Mobility
(Motion as Non-Linear Permission)

The footwear apparatus is inspected across multiple timelines:
— in one: it is shoes
— in another: it is wheels
— in another: it is evidence of municipal optimism
— in another: it has never been assembled but is still approved

When activated, it produces motion that does not relocate the subject so much as updates their position in different versions of the same street.

Vincent: *Movement is editorial revision applied to space.*

Jacobus: *The street blesses those who pass through its alternate drafts.*

Rashid: *Travel is what happens when cities disagree with themselves.*

Virgil Kay Stamps:
MORILITY: GRANTED ACROSS ALL KNOWN STREET VARIANTS

IV. The City Hall as Stacked Time Object

The Treasury Office is observed as:
- a room that exists in 1911 (fire memory layer)
- 1964 (planning abstraction layer)
- 1997 (restoration impulse layer)
- 2026 (current fluorescent administrative layer)
- and an unbuilt future where it is a parking lot remembering itself as a building

Walls contain:
- scroll fragments that have not yet been written
- newspaper clippings reporting future loss
- maps that disagree politely with each other
- stamps that remember being used differently

A Chant Moves Through All Layers at Once:

All permits are continuous
All streets are simultaneous
All walking is revisiting

V. Entities That Occur Outside Time but Inside Record

Paul Bunyan
(Scale Anomaly Witness Across Municipal Layers)
Appears in doorway, simultaneously too large for building and perfectly scaled for it.

Kenduskeag Sasquatch
(Hydrological Continuity Observer)
Waits without waiting; is always already leaving. Witnesses every flood at once.

The Creamsicle Freezer of Outer Bangor Lot
(Perpetual Cold Object)
Contains identical creamsicles in every recorded year. Temperature does not change; only interpretation does.

VI. Footnotes (*which occur before and after the text*)

[1] Vincent of Beauvais:
"The archive is not storage; it is simultaneity with filing cabinets."

[2] Jacobus de Voragine:
"Legends are what happens when the present refuses to stay in its assigned tense."

[3] Rashid al-Din Hamadani:
"Bangor cannot be dated. It can only be approached from different administrative angles."

[4] Virgil Kay:
Stamped note: roller-blade sneakers classified as lateral time instruments.

VII. Questions That Cannot Be Answered Because They Are Still Occurring

1. Is the subject entering City Hall, or has City Hall entered the subject?
2. If a building burns in one layer but is restored in another, which version requires permits?
3. Do wheels move a person, or move the street under them?
4. Who signs a document that has already been signed in a different century?
5. Is the creamsicle freezer a place, a memory, or a recurring municipal exception?
6. When Paul Bunyan leaves, does he exit or simply change scale context?
7. Does the Sasquatch require a tax category or a new ontology?

1911: The Great Fire

1914: Opera House Burns

1920: Rebuilt in Style

1964: Urban Renewal Vote

1997: Restoration Begins

2026: Jane's Walks

What's not there and what could be.

All Things Temporary All The Time

This Document Exists In All Its Dates At Once
∞

Subject Released Into Continuous Sidewalk Status
City of Bangor Continues Self-Revision
∞

Final Entry (Non-Terminal)

NOTHING IS FILED ONCE
NOTHING IS OVER
NOTHING IS BEFORE OR AFTER WITHOUT PERMISSION

Virgil Kay
Editor Rooster China Wok Habitué
Treasury Clerk & Stamper of Conditional True Things

Virgil Kay

QUESTO ABRIGADO TANTAMUCHO QUE CANITE CAROUSEL

By Ricky Norelco

The teller window at Bangor Savings Bank, State Street Branch, had never aligned its hours precisely with the sun. Customers blamed the clock on the far wall. Management blamed regional policy. Dave Harlan, forty-seven years of accumulated shifts, blamed the particular angle of light that arrived most afternoons around three-fifteen, sliding across the Penobscot's remembered lumber routes and the foundations of mills long since catalogued under "Former Industrial, Section Four." The same light now rested on his forearm while he counted twenties for a woman whose account had once belonged to her father, whose account had once belonged to the cannery that

paid wages in scrip. Dave's fingers moved with procedural correctness. The sun moved with indifference. Both had paperwork.

The promotion to Senior Loan Officer had contained traces of Assistant Branch Manager, which in turn contained traces of the original teller position he had never fully vacated. Catalog cards in the back office—digital now, but the smell of paper lingered in the filing protocols—still listed his name under multiple strata: 2003 hire, 2015 commendation for local knowledge, 2022 performance adjustment, 2025 further realignment to customer-facing strengths. The difference between ascent and descent had grown difficult to maintain. Lisa's text about Ethan's tuition arrived like a marginal note in someone else's ledger. The house in Brewer occupied land that had once supported a modest orchard; the orchard had supported a family that expected steady ladders. Dave's eyes drifted to the window. The sun occupied the same sky that had once warmed log drives and later warmed the backs of men who believed reliability was currency. It continued to do so without comment.

Procedure required him to verify the customer's ID. The ID showed an address on Union Street, itself built atop older Union Street, which had once housed the Merrill Merchants Bank branch before consolidations filed under "Institutional Migration, 20th Century." Dave's own demotions possessed similar municipal gravity: first for documentation lapses during the humid regulatory season of 2021–22, when even the river seemed to sweat; second for visible disengagement noted in the quarterly audit, itself a descendant of earlier audits that had praised the very steadiness now deemed insufficient. Sarah at the next station asked if he was good. He was not not good. The sun, meanwhile, performed its scheduled transit across the glass with technical precision, warmth on skin requiring no approval from Human Resources. A dragon of quiet resignation had acquired all necessary municipal permits and now occupied the space between transactions. Its filings were impeccable.

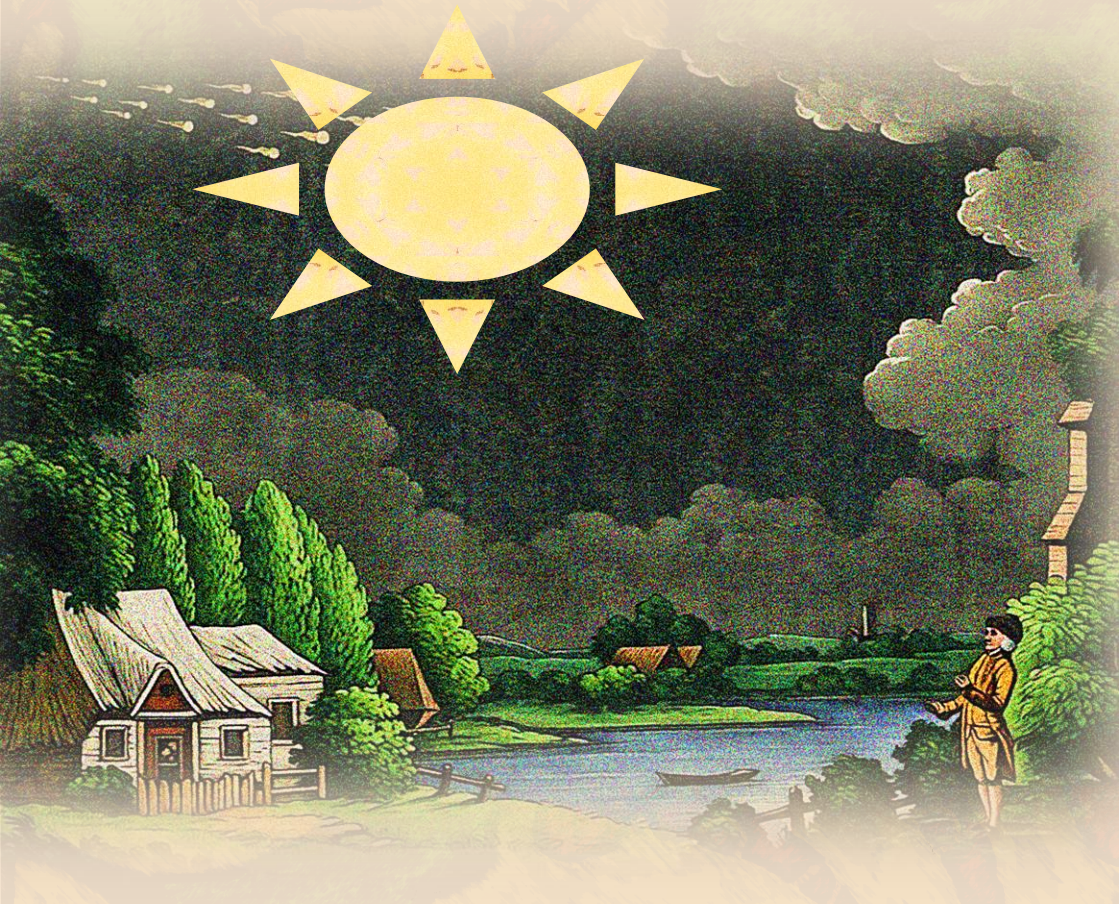
The doctor (if consulted) might have called the window-staring a symptom of burnout. The

bank's compliance officer might have called it an archival incident of reduced productivity. Dave himself called it Tuesday. The catalog cards in his mind listed competing explanations without forcing consensus: the sun as escape hatch, the sun as indifferent witness, the sun as the only object in the branch that had never been demoted. Lisa called it the same distance that had settled between them like damp in the foundations. Ethan called it Dad being Dad. The children at the old orchard site (long since subdivided) would have understood the man who simply continued occupying the ground. Multiple voices coexisted, none granted final authority. The light kept moving.

Years from now—though the precise year remained unfiled—the State Street branch would undergo renovation. Workers would find the same faint discoloration on the carpet where a teller had stood longest, catalogued under "Unusual Wear Patterns, Section Seven." Nobody would know exactly why that spot received more traffic than others. The city would simply note it, move the relevant fixtures, and leave the sun to

its own ongoing administration. Dave finished the transaction. "Have a good one." The words arrived automatic yet inhabited, like a street name that outlives its original referent. He let his eyes rest once more on the bright patch of glass.

The sun, having no filing cabinet, simply continued. Dave, possessing several, did the same.



FOUR-UP, GRID BOUND

By Ty Nevada

Inventory arranged for observational purposes only. Not intended as recommendation.

"good enough."

I. BRINE

looks like courthouse pillars.

MACKEREL repeats itself into a colonnade, red on black,,red on black, a fish canonized into columns — each tin a caryatid holding up nothing but its own net weight, 4.93 oz.., in oil, in a country that has forgotten what a caryatid is for.

II. LOAF

Question never reopened.

Celebrity — the brand name doing its small ironic labor — stacked and doubled until LUNCHEON becomes a chant, a green hymn tiled to the edge of the frame. Somewhere a factory decided seven ounces was a serving and never revisited the question.

III. JUNK, NEGATIVE

already did.

Black and white and no mercy between them: a crane, a sink upended like a confessional, a Ferris wheel gondola drifting the top edge the way a thought drifts a sentence it no longer belongs to. And the sign, doing what signs do — SLOW DOWN — planted in a field that has already stopped moving.

IV. SINGLE

better.

PORTION ACCEPTED.

~~PORTION DOCUMENTED.~~
~~RECORDED.~~

PORTION RECORDED.

The Perfect Single Slice — nine grams of protein and a whole rhetoric built around portion, around solitude, around the word classic printed hot enough to bleed into the black behind it.

ARCHIVAL CIRCULAR — REPRODUCTION AUTHORIZED UNTIL THE STENCIL FAILS.

COPY No. 31

FOWL FEATHERED REVIEW
DEPARTMENT OF REPEATED OBJECTS
BASEMENT DISTRIBUTION NETWORK

If these arrangements begin resembling monuments, continue inventory exactly as before.

!?

The Cereal Killers, or: A Montre of Three Mouths

By Komodo Cholera

Who am I, who am I, who-hoo am I, sirs, mesdames, gullible congregation of the streaming hour? I am the one who bowls. I am the one who owns nothing and rings everything. Ha! I rhyme bowl with owl with hole and none of it explains the milk. Explaining is for the Department. I am not the Department. I am the box before the Department opens it.

Let us begin, as all marvelous things begin, in a hallway that used to be a hallway and is now, by unanimous vote of the dust, an arcade. Glass roof, glass counters, a folding table underneath the glass like a coffin trying to pass as a picnic. Under this glass ecoutez a watch. Not a watch. The watch. Every watch is the same watch wearing a different alibi; this is the first law of horology and also, I am reliably uninformed, the first law of desire. You do not want the hour. You want to be seen wanting the hour. The watch does not tell time. The watch watches. That is the whole scandal folded into six letters and a strap.

(Here the essay trips on its own hem and becomes, without apology, three tableaux.)

She worked a laundromat at the fraying end of a street the city repaved once and

then, embarrassed by its own generosity, never again. She was not unhappy **happiness being, like the watch, a thing you perform for a camera nobody admits is running.**

She noticed a Timex on a folding table ticks louder than a phone. This is not a fact. This is a wound dressed as a fact. A phone tells you the time reluctantly, the way a stranger gives directions; a watch was chosen, once, by somebody, for a reason, and this the choosing, the reason, the somebody is the whole engine of jealousy disguised as a wristband.

She kept a ledger. Marbled composition notebook, one line per watch, because a vigilante without a ledger is only a thief with a thesis statement.

Incident, filed under Section Twelve, undated: The watch entered the bowl at 9:14 in the evening, still counting. On the

fifth day it did not stop because it broke. It stopped because thirty meters was a promise about rain and the bowl, strictly speaking, had never once discussed the weather with anyone.

Here the mannequin in the arcade window turns her glass head one half of one degree, and nobody sees this happen, and everybody agrees, later, over cocoa, that it happened.

Is that a fruit rings box?

It is a Fruit Rings box, and a fruit rink's box is a different thing entirely, a small ice arena for citrus, do not confuse the two, the Committee has already fined me once for the confusion.

Whose watch tonight?

Tonight's watch belongs, previously, to a man who is not here and does not know he is not here, which is, if you think about it

and please don't **the human condition wearing a leather band.**

The dragon may exist. The dragon requires paperwork. She filled out the paperwork in the dragon's own hand, because the dragon, like the watch, only speaks through the objects it leaves behind.

It is not "for all intensive purposes." It is four all intense he-purposes, said the horologist, who by trade repairs what time forgets to finish, and who insists the correct idiom for grief is "a doggy-dog world," because grief, like the world, keeps circling back to bite its own leash. Nobody corrects the horologist. Correcting the horologist is a Committee matter and the Committee, this week, is on loan to Sandwich Affairs.

He fixed vending machines for a company that had stopped, some years prior,

answering its own telephone **a company, in other words, that had achieved the corporate equivalent of a locked diary. He did not think of himself as angry. He thought of himself as thorough, which is what angry calls itself when it wants a raise.**

The balls in his bowl rolled the way ball bearings roll inside the machines he served, a coincidence he mentioned exactly once and the chat has been humming ever since, a congregation that will not put down a hymn once it has been handed one, world without ending, foil unto foil.

He lined a drawer with the smoothed-flat foil of cereal bags because foil slows the tarnish. Every miracle requires a filing cabinet. His was a kitchen drawer. The filing system was foil, and the foil, filed, became I regret to inform the reader, but

the report insists **Exhibit Foil-One, Confuser of Gulls, Unrepentant.**

He asked, on air, what a filing cabinet dreams about, and before the horologist could answer, the segment ended, the feed cut to static, and when it resumed forty seconds later he was discussing, calmly, the correct water pressure for a vending machine's ice dispenser, as though the question about the filing cabinet had been asked by somebody else, in a different building, possibly a building that no longer exists, possibly a building that is filing a complaint about its own nonexistence with the Department this very moment.

The watch in his bowl kept perfect time for six days, a pale disc under the chocolate, until the second hand and the studio's ambient hum synced for one full minute **a coincidence the engineer confirmed, filed, and declined to**

explain, on the grounds that some coincidences, once explained, refuse to ever happen again, out of spite.

We're deep in the balls now. Chocolate balls, for the record, before Legal calls again.

What kind of balls, exactly, does Legal think

Legal is the Third Committee of Sandwich Affairs. On loan. They have Notes.

What are the Notes?

The Notes are: one watch, one bowl, and no more foil in the recycling, the gulls are confused, they've been confused since March, and nobody in this building will take responsibility for March, March being, structurally, an orphan month that nobody adopted.

Consider the second hand. Consider that we call it second, as though the first hand had already failed us, had already been superseded, had already, in some prior scandal nobody archived, been caught doing something unspeakable to the twelve. The second hand is the understudy who murdered the lead and now performs the role flawlessly, sweeping, sweeping, and every sweep is a small assassination we agree, collectively, to call time passing so that no one has to press charges.

I only mention this because the mannequin's glass head has turned another half a degree, and the arcade is closing, and none of us have paid for anything, and this the closing without paying is either commerce's oldest sickness or its only mercy, the horologist is not yet certain which, ask him next Tuesday, Tuesday being, as established, everyone's business but nobody's fault.

The youngest of the three, and the only one who still owned a watch of her own, which she never once wore on stream **a detail the chat clocked long before she confirmed it, because the chat, like the mirror, notices absence with more precision than presence.**

Frost, she said, is only water that agreed to slow down. She did not explain further, because further explanation is a kind of undressing and she had already, by choosing this box and no other, told everyone everything.

Her rule she called Section Seven, after a plaque the city once moved to a museum for reasons nobody could reconstruct, a plaque that now explains a bridge to an audience that has never seen the bridge and never will, the plaque having outlived the bridge's relevance the way a caption outlives the joke. She took watches only

from men who had bragged about them within her hearing. Overhear, confirm, wait one week, act. Every impossible thing requires a procedure. Hers had four verbs and no mercy, which is, I am told, also the recipe for a sonnet, minus the mercy, plus fourteen fewer lines.

A man once bragged, within her hearing, about a watch he did not in fact own, having sold it years earlier to settle a debt he also did not own, the debt having been inherited from an uncle who and here the man, mid-sentence, simply stopped existing on camera, not dramatically, not with a sound, he was there and then the chair he'd been sitting in was empty and slightly warm, and the stream's caption software, which does not editorialize, printed only: [SPEAKER 2 HAS LEFT THE CALL]. Nobody investigated. Section Seven does not require the watch to be real. It requires only the bragging,

which unlike the man, unlike the uncle, unlike the debt is still, to this hour, on file.

Will we ever see the watches again?

Two of them, certainly. Ask the Department. Ask the gulls, who remain confused, structurally, since March. Ask the accordion repairman, who has opinions and, I am told, a squeezebox full of them.

And the third?

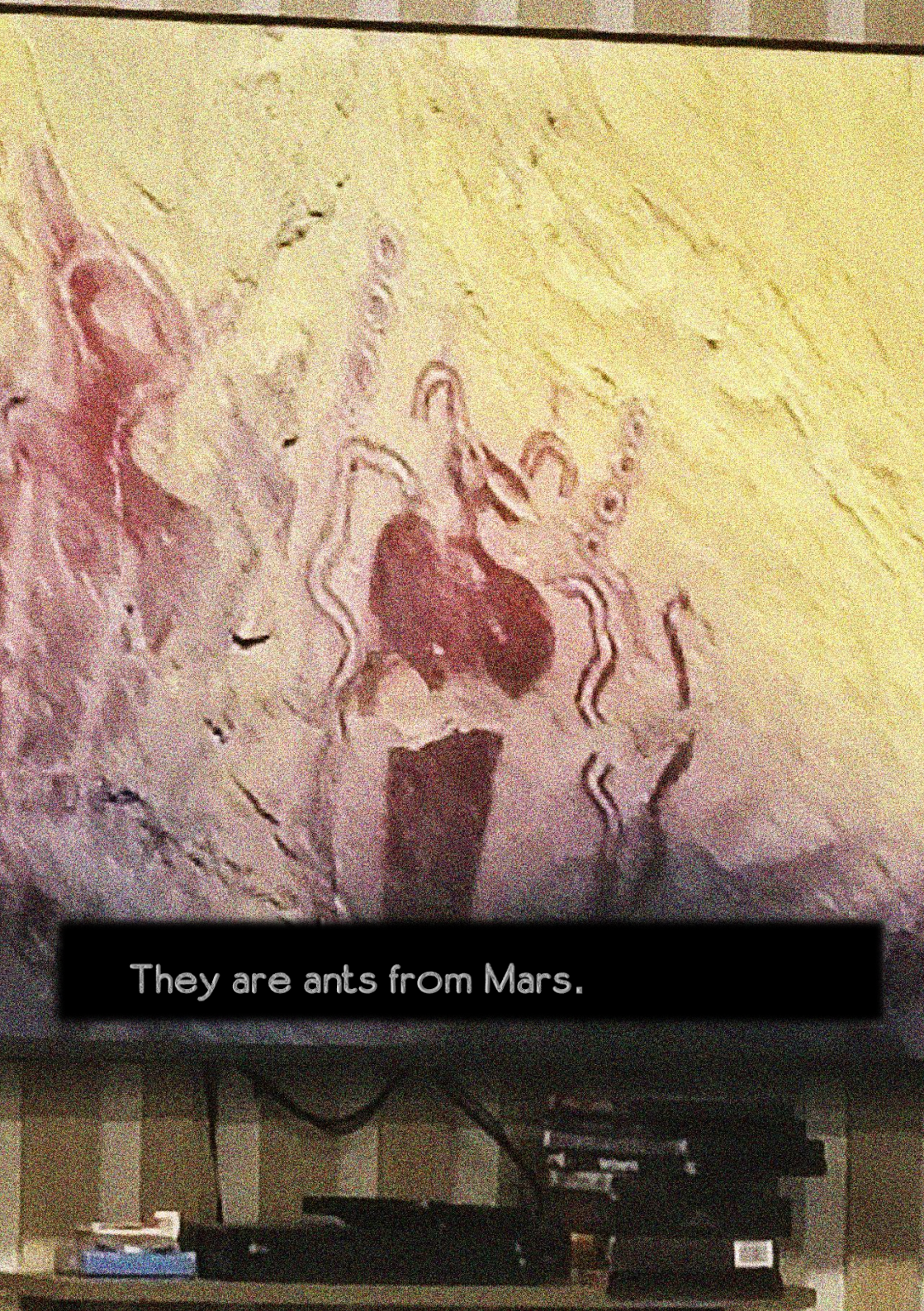
The third is in a freezer nobody but her can open. This is not concealment. You watched the whole thing happen every box, every bowl, every minute the second hand kept assassinating the first hand under the milk. A freezer, like a legend, like a mirror, like a watch, does not owe you the door. It only owes you the reflection of your own wanting,

frosted slightly, at twenty meters, untested.

Chi sono, chi sono, who is the who that owns the hour? I am the milk gone pink with rings, I am the foil that slowed the tarnish, I am the plaque explaining a bridge nobody can find, I am the caption that says left the call about a man who never, in the strictest sense, arrived at one. The watch does not measure time. The watch measures the exact distance between what you noticed and what you were too polite to say out loud. Go make some breakfast. The bowl is patient. The bowl has always been patient. It is, structurally, the only committee in this whole affair that has never once gone on loan.

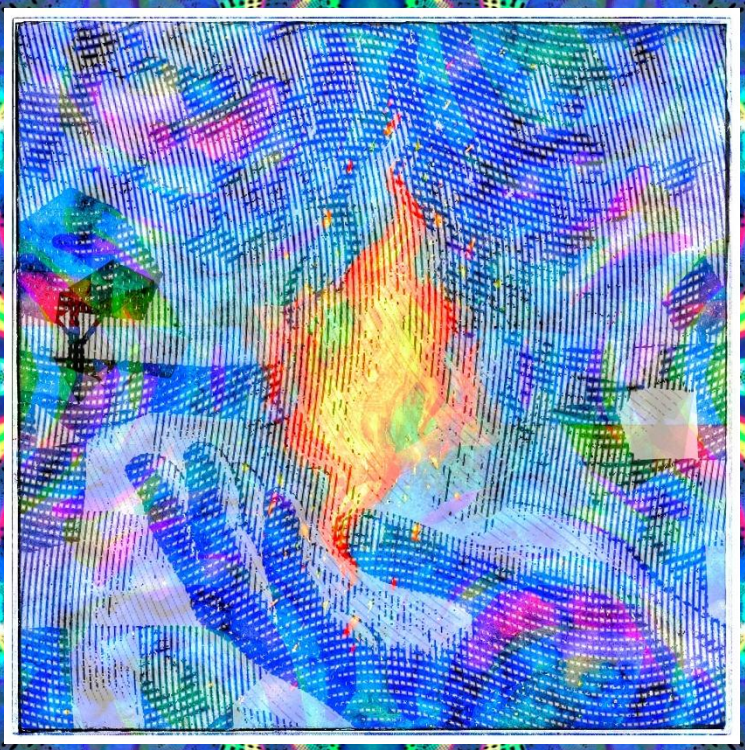
~~end of triptych, refracted, unrepentant, foil intact~~

JUDY'S HOUSE SPECIAL
2 EGGS
TOAST
COFFEE
Choice of
BACON or
SAUSAGE, HAM
BREAKFAST • LUNCH & SANDWICHES
SPIRITS
COLD BEVERAGES
JUDY'S
BREAKFAST • LUNCH & SANDWICHES


They are ants from Mars.

And they HATE Papa Johns

PIZZA MUST NEVER BE THROWN.
IT MUST BE SHARED.
LEARN WELL, YOUNG CHILD.



THE FLAME

THAT LEARNED THE HUMAN HAND

By Yanğın Var

A speculative ethnography of the first technology

"Pada suatu hari nanti, impianku pun tak dikenal lagi...
Namun di sela-sela huruf silsilah ini, kau akan tetap kaucari...
Aku yang tak pernah kaukenal ini."
— Sapardi Djoko Damono

Before the cave had a name

the dark kept a small red animal.

Not alive.

Not dead.

A borrowed weather

held between stones.

– the roof became weather.

The hand approached.

The hand withdrew.

The hand invented distance.

— hearing the stone, the people sought the fire within the fire.

What is a flame

when nobody owns the word for burning?

A mouth without hunger?

A tree that has forgotten its branches?

The first fire was not captured.

It was persuaded.

The ember-carrier walked through winter.

Behind him:

a portable dawn,

a coal-heart wrapped in ash-cloth,

a little thunder asleep inside a hollow vessel.

He carried tomorrow

without knowing tomorrow existed.

— build with dream-brick, treaty-straw, forest-bone, with the hidden queen's ember.

The queen was not a ruler.

She was the agreement.

The flame that demanded care

and rewarded attention.

A sovereign carried in a clay bowl.

The hearth gathered faces.

Not because people loved warmth.

Because the flame made everyone briefly visible.

The grandmother's story.

The child's question.

The hunter's silence.

The oldest council sat in the red circle.

No throne.

Only tending.

A queen must burn without burning.

The smoke-memory climbed upward

to become a roof above the roof.

The clay bowl entered the fire

and returned as another thing.

Who taught the earth

to harden its voice?

The kiln answered:

I only listened.

– capable of learning primal grace: only a captive becomes it.

The earth entered the furnace

not as a prisoner defeated,

but as a prisoner

discovering another shape.

Kiln-red decision.

Earth taught by fire

to keep its promise.

Copper went soft in the coals

and remembered nothing of the rock.

A hammer found the shape

a stone could never hold.

The forge smelled of scorched marrow
and wet iron —
a second mouth,
chewing mountains into blades
and nails
and rings.
A prisoner, yet undefeated.
A ring ticking silently.
For what is a chain
except metal that has forgotten
it was once a mountain?
For what is a tool
except matter persuaded
to remember a human dream?
The flame made villages
the way a river makes a bend:
by being followed.
Roads were only paths

people walked

carrying coals

that must not go out.

Brick after brick,

the kiln-throat swallowed forests

and exhaled walls

warm enough to lean a shoulder against.

(CHOSEN STASIS: THE HEARTH REMAINS.)

The fire sits.

The fire waits.

The fire asks nothing.

The empire may rise.

The furnace may roar.

The machine may imitate thunder.

But the small flame remains.

Then came the engines.

The hidden furnaces.

The iron animals coughing across continents.

A new sun chained beneath a roof.
A machine-heart beating faster
than any village drum.
The old coal became industry.
The old ember became electricity.
The old hand became invisible
inside the mechanism.
And still —
inside every furnace:
the old hand.
The old stone.
The old question.
Did we master the fire,
or did the fire teach us
to build a world large enough
to contain its appetite?
The answer is:
no one can see.

Then the furnace vanishes.

The volcano does not answer.

The lightning does not answer.

The match struck in a kitchen at midnight

does not answer.

Only the small flame on the table,

the one nobody notices,

continues its ancient occupation:

making the invisible visible.

Ash remembers the forest.

Smoke remembers the tree.

Glass remembers the sand.

Iron remembers the mountain.

Every transformation

is an archive.

Every burning

is a language.

Vāsavadattā had burned.

So the ministers announced.

The city believed them

because fire had spoken.

A flame became evidence.

A furnace became authority.

A burning became history.

A coal becomes a signal.

A signal becomes a furnace.

A furnace becomes a star imprisoned in machinery.

The same brightness

wearing different clothing.

After building,

hands die.

The walls remain.

The tools rust.

The names disappear.

The wolf returns whenever walls forget their purpose.

The queen returns whenever fire is asked

to certify absence.

No answer.

Only heat.

Only transformation.

Only the quiet engineering

of becoming.

The oldest human invention

was not fire.

It was the agreement

between darkness

and a thing

that refuses

to disappear.

What is that sound?

EDDIE'S
SED CARS
STOP
PUMPKINS

FLAGMAN'S BROADSIDE No. 7

or, A Municipal Study of Things That Move Without Intending To

FEUILLETON

Earl, the road flagman, has become so accustomed to the slight turning of his neck that he no longer remembers which direction was once called straight ahead. He holds the STOP paddle as though it were not an order but a polite suggestion offered to gravity.

The morning arranges itself around him with unexpected courtesy.
Behind him, the inflatable fellow at the used-car lot suffers from permanent enthusiasm. It folds in half, collapses, leaps upward, waves both impossible arms, and appears delighted by every gust that almost kills it. One imagines that if the blower were switched off, it would continue celebrating out of habit.

Across the road, a vendor has established a republic of pumpkins. Beside them stands a scarecrow in an old plaid shirt. It has acquired the patient expression found only among librarians, scarecrows, and people waiting for municipal permits. Every third passerby greets it. Every third greeting goes unanswered with admirable tact.

A calico cat pauses between two pumpkins, inflates itself into a parenthesis, then proceeds sideways across the gravel in a solemn dance. It

resembles a sentence attempting to avoid its own verb.

Higher still, fastened to a telephone pole, a weathered taxidermied vulture inclines one rigid wing whenever the wind remembers it. Nobody recalls who placed it there. Therefore it has become historical. In small places, memory eventually hardens into zoning.

A weary pedestrian rests both hands upon Earl's stop sign and leans forward for the length of one traffic cycle. The sign performs an unlisted civic function. It supports not merely vehicles but exhaustion.

The road opens.
The road closes.
Nothing argues.
Everything gestures.

The only creature standing exactly as intended was the scarecrow, which explained why everyone trusted the flagman instead.

DRAMOLETTE

THE STOP SIGN:
Must everyone lean on me?
EARL:
Only those carrying more than they expected.
THE INFLATABLE MAN:
Observe! I have mastered the wind!
THE VULTURE:
You have merely borrowed it.
THE SCARECROW:
Silence is excellent advertising.
THE CAT:
Forward is only one of several respectable directions.
EARL:
Proceed when ready.
Nobody moved at once.

For a brief moment, even the wind seemed willing to wait.

Found folded behind a faded roadwork permit, Stillwater District. The paper bears a faint ring from a coffee cup and one orange fingerprint that may have belonged to a pumpkin, a work glove, or October itself.

3 Bridges

First Bridge — The Signal

Hashemi, Sara. "An Experimental Brain Implant Allows People With Paralysis to Type Their Thoughts With Their Minds." *Smithsonian Magazine*, March 19, 2026. https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/an-experimental-brain-implant-allows-people-with-paralysis-to-type-their-thoughts-with-their-minds-180988365/.

Annotation: The organ speaks without the hand — a Hammond built from cortex instead of tonewheels. File under: telepathy achieved through hardware, not séance. The

kind of dispatch that would have made the Whole Earth Catalog crowd nod slowly into their coffee, half in wonder, half already planning the commune newsletter about it.

Second Bridge — The Wood

Springer, John S. *Forest Life and Forest Trees.* Rev. ed. Somersworth, NH: New Hampshire Publishing Company, 1971.

Annotation: A 19th-century lumberman's field notes, resurrected a century later by a small New Hampshire press — the literary equivalent of finding an old growth stand nobody logged. Less Thoreau's pond, more

the working forest behind it: axes, camps, and men who measured the woods by what it cost to move through them.

Third Bridge — The Ghosts

Halkett, Samuel, and John Laing. *A Dictionary of Anonymous and Pseudonymous English Literature.* New and enl. ed. Rev. and ed. James Kennedy, W. A. Smith, and A. F. Johnson. 8 vols. Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1926–1934.

Annotation: The great ledger of the unclaimed — eight volumes tracking down every writer who hid behind an initial, a

blank, or a borrowed name. A very Renaissance instinct, this: publish under a mask, let the guild sort it out later. Halkett and Laing did the sorting, and it took three editors and a decade to finish the job.

MAT AS CANVAS AS SCROLL

By Georgia Melés

Somewhere north of the last blinking gantry light of a lighthouse that no longer needs keeping, two bears—one old, rust-shouldered, moving the way continents move, which is to say without apology—and one young, unschooled in the courtesies of territory, converged that same week at the lip of a blueberry barren still smoking with June frost.

They did not announce themselves.
Bears do not announce themselves.

They arrive already arguing, already mid-sentence in a quarrel that predates the forest they are standing in.

Let us begin, then, as the old cosmographers began their atlases, with a wound in the map.

Not Bangor exactly. Not West Bangor. Not even the salt-crusted purgatory between an airport's threshold lights and an industrial corridor's forgotten teeth.

Rather: the idea of such a place.

The notion that geography itself can present with symptoms.

That a gravel lot can suffer from something.

That a drainage ditch, a chain-link fence, a pile of municipal salt slowly hardening beneath a weather-stained tarp might contain, if examined closely enough, the emotional evidence of a whole region.

The salt had been stored there longer than anyone living could remember why. De-icing, presumably. The small municipal war against black ice, waged every winter with the same grim, Sisyphean cheer. The ground itself had been built around the prevention of falling.

And it is fitting—absurdly fitting, in the overdetermined way only provincial mythology can achieve—that the site of our

combat should be a place designed to melt what threatens to make people collapse.

The old man arrived wearing the Nixon mask.

This requires explanation, although explanation is precisely the thing that often ruins a good mystery.
Gerald had once kept lighthouses.
Not metaphorically.

Not in the grand, symbolic manner writers prefer when they wish to turn a person into a monument.

He had actually maintained lights on rocks in the ocean, climbed stairs in winter storms, checked mechanisms while waves threw themselves against the foundations below him.

Now he walked the airport woods at night.

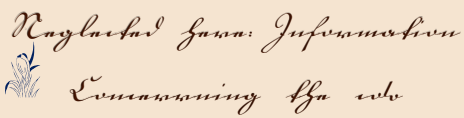
A flashlight with black electrical tape around the handle.
A thermos with a faded sticker from a company that had closed years ago.
A ring of keys, many of which no longer opened anything.

The Nixon mask was not a political statement.
It was not satire.
It was simply the kind of thing a lonely man buys when loneliness begins to require props.

The unicorn mask was different.
The unicorn mask belonged to the boy.
Four-millimeter eyeholes.
A plastic horn.
A view of the world reduced to a glowing tunnel.

He wore it because he believed, with the absolute sincerity of the frightened, that he had discovered something hidden.
The Matrix.

A pattern.
A secret behind the ordinary.
He held up his phone and streamed.
To nobody.
Or perhaps to everyone who had not yet arrived.



One must resist, and yet cannot entirely resist, the old Gallic temptation to read the whole affair semiotically.
The Nixon mask as floating signifier, detached from its original history and wandering freely through the ruins of American meaning.

The unicorn as a machine for accidental enlightenment.

The old keeper as failed symbol.
The young man as a person who has confused visibility with existence.

Somewhere, a committee of French theorists—convened posthumously and against their will in the back booth of a Bangor diner that serves breakfast until 2 a.m.—is arguing about the mirror stage.
Does the boy, catching his own neon reflection in the fogged window of a parked Subaru, misrecognize himself as whole?
As heroic?
As streamed?

Is the entire spectacle a grand and pathetic *méconnaissance*, the subject constructing itself in the gaze of an audience of zero viewers, the *objet petit a* taking the ridiculous shape of a viral clip that will never render because the cell tower near the runway keeps eating the bitrate?

And is not the runway itself the true monster of the piece?

A monster made of aluminum and jet fuel.

A monster that screams awake every few hours and carries people toward Newark, Philadelphia, and other more solvent forms of elsewhere.
A monster built upon the simplest fact: everyone who could leave, left.

The boy steps forward.
The old man steps forward.
The phone records.
The masks look at one another.
The forest watches.
And somewhere beyond the fence line, two bears continue an argument neither human will ever understand.

The record, such as it is—and here I invoke the entire apparatus of the coroner's report, the toxicology addendum, the footnote nobody reads but somebody, God help them, wrote—must include the following evidence.

Not a recipe.
An indictment.

Forty-four ounces of diet soda whose sweetness is a small betrayal performed upon the tongue by chemistry.
Coconut syrup.
Heavy cream.

A single crushed vitamin shaped, with the particular sadness of American childhood, like a cartoon caveman.

A beverage assembled somewhere between a convenience store, a memory, and a cry for help.

Chemistry does not care about kayfabe.
The pancreas does not know it is watching a worked shoot.
The larynx, offended by citrus and dairy arriving together under false pretenses, does not consult the script.

And yet—

this, too, belongs to the mythology.
The Diet Sprite of deindustrialization.
The heavy cream of nostalgia.
The strange American ritual of adding sweetness to things that have already become difficult to swallow.

The boy drinks courage because courage has become something available in bottles, cans, and flavors.
The town drinks nostalgia because nostalgia is cheaper than rebuilding.

Somewhere overhead, satellites pass signals from a phone held by a young man who believes he has glimpsed the hidden architecture of reality.
Somewhere behind him, unseen, drainage ditches and fence lines map the actual geometry of the world.
Euclidean.
Boring.
True.

Between these two geometries—the paranoid and the pedestrian—stands the entire explanatory problem of American loneliness.

Friends help you move. Real friends help you move bodies.

A country increasingly willing to interpret isolation as conspiracy rather than admit it as grief.

The boy moves first.
Or perhaps the old man does.
Memory, like all witnesses, becomes unreliable when the scene is sufficiently ridiculous.
There is a grapple.
A stumble.
A brief and entirely unnecessary attempt at heroism.
The unicorn horn tilts sideways.
The Nixon mask wrinkles.
The phone continues recording.
The old man is stronger than he appears.

This should not surprise anyone.
A man who has spent decades maintaining machinery on rocks in the ocean does not become weightless simply because he grows older.
His grip is not theatrical.
It is not borrowed from television.
It is the grip of someone who knows the difference between performance and consequence.
The boy, attempting a maneuver learned from cable television and internet fragments, discovers the ancient truth of every physical encounter: the body remembers what the mind has forgotten.
The shoulder takes the lesson, then the ribs.
He does not fall.
Not completely.
No count. No pin. No verdict a referee could raise a hand for.
And not-falling is itself a kind of debt.
One pays later.
Usually in scar tissue.

I confess—and confession is the only honest posture available to a chronicler standing this close to absurdity—that something almost liturgical occurs in the aftermath.

The old carnival strongman, accidentally resurrected.

The young performer, suddenly returned to being merely young.

The empty gravel lot becoming, in the Durkheimian sense, briefly effervescent.

There is a ritual, a congregation.

There are no witnesses.

The livestream has zero viewers.

And still something happens.

Because rituals do not require an audience.

They require the belief that one might arrive.

Then the mask comes off.
Not metaphorically.
Actually.
Rubber peeled away from a flushed and exhausted face.
And beneath the mask that had been beneath the mask—
beneath the Nixon, beneath the performance, beneath the mythology,
There is no cryptid.
There is Gerald.
There is only ever, in the end, a Gerald.
Fifty-six years old.
Mill closed in 2015.
Wife dead in 2020.
A house that has learned how to become loud in her absence.
A silence with weight.
A silence with, in the old keeper's private vocabulary, tonnage.

The boy removes his unicorn mask halfway.

Not because he understands.

Not yet.

But because something about the old man's face has interrupted the story he thought he was filming.

"You ain't no cryptid," the man says.

His voice carries the cadence of someone delivering a blessing without realizing he knows one.

"You're just workin' a late shift, ain't you."

And there it is.

The entire treatise.

The entire footnoted, cross-referenced, philosophically over-equipped *cri de cœur.*

Collapsed into nine words spoken by a man who repaired lighthouse machinery for a living and now repairs, however briefly, another person's sense of being visible.

No finish needed after that. No angle to protect. Just two men clocking out at the same hour.

The boy looks down at his phone.
The screen shows the truth.
Zero viewers.
Not zero meaning.
Just zero viewers.
He asks the only question his generation has been trained by algorithms to ask of every disaster:
"Is the bitrate dropping?"
The old man laughs.
Not loudly.
Not cruelly.
The laugh of someone who has spent enough years alone to recognize absurdity when it finally introduces itself.
The boy turns the stream off.
A tiny act.
Almost invisible.
Perhaps the only unquestionably good choice available in the entire narrative.

The old man reaches into his pocket.
He removes a cigarette.

The boy does not smoke.
Neither does Gerald.
Neither intends to.
But the cigarette remains between them for a moment anyway.
A failed offering.
A communion object.
A wafer replaced by tobacco neither party will ignite.
The important thing is not the cigarette.
The important thing is the handoff.
A hand touching another hand.
A small proof that both still exist.

Overhead, an Airbus screams away from the runway lights toward whatever economy still wants Bangor's departure gates.
For three seconds, the jet wash parts the fog.
A curtain opens.
A stage is revealed.
And the stage is almost empty.

No villain.
No monster.
No conspiracy.
Only people who were lonely enough to wear costumes.

The boy puts the phone away.
The old man puts the cigarette away.
Neither one says anything profound.
Fortunately.
Some moments survive because nobody explains them.

And beyond the fence line, the two bears have already stopped fighting.
The larger one senses something shifted in the wind.

The smaller one, perhaps, has forgotten what the argument was about.

They stand rib-deep in fern.

Breathing.
Neither enemy.
Neither victorious.

No decision. No rematch clause.
Then, as they did before the humans entered the story, they turn away from one another and lumber into separate weathers.

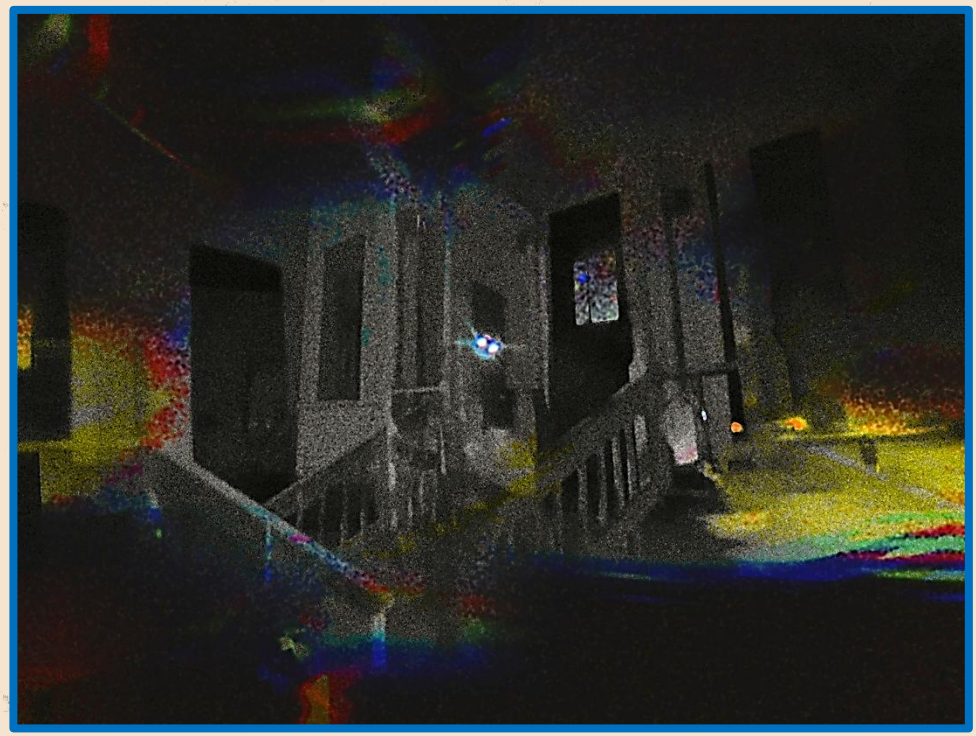
No prizes.
No witnesses.
No final judgment.
The forest does not keep records of victories.
It does not preserve transcripts.
It does not care who was right.
It keeps only what everything eventually becomes.
Silence.

16

THE SMALL BACK ROOM

Checked
1987

CHECKED



F.F.R. 19
ARTIFACT: RESTRICTED
CATALOGED: MENDED
oil slick
hand-rolling hand rust written clicks
MOVEMENT V
RAINCOAT
FOOTBRIDGE
IV
POLY-CAMERA OBSCURA
TIMESHEET
INOPERABLE
III
MITE
MITE
FILM EMULSION
POLY-CAMERA OBSIURA
II
MAPLE TREE
THE REACH
CHARGE LINE: BLANK
FED GULLS
TS-P/W 4 (VAC)
I
ANSONIA GREENLAW

The Consensus Emulsion

A Tree Street Opus in Five Movements

By K.Y. Alani

MOVEMENT I — SALT ON THE HOUSING

For thirteen years the case stayed bolted to the piling while the reach kept its own count, salt working the aluminum like a slow administrative hand that never signed anything twice. Ansonia Greenlaw came out every six weeks with lens tissue folded in her pocket and a thermos that had lost its vacuum long before the last

name change on the letterhead. The probes kept their numbers; the gasket did not. Inside the aluminum the air turned to brine and the brine turned to a quiet ledger of its own decay, each reading now carrying the faint signature of the housing that contained it. A shipping label from the reconditioning year still clung to the inside lid, its ink blurred to the color of old creosote, the charge line left blank except for the penciled note that she fed the gulls and required nothing else.

The schedule held. Titer, yield, desiccant change, the same sequence whether anyone remembered the company that had once paid for it. The sea had already eaten the original vessel; the case simply continued the work on land terms. By the eleventh year the instrument had begun to log the conditions of its own enclosure more faithfully than the water it was meant to measure. That was the first protected structure: the forgotten custodian who had reconditioned the case

for nothing and left the note that still governed the maintenance.

MOVEMENT II — GRAFTING

The credentialed job arrived with a binder of SOPs and a salary that could be entered on a single line. Fern Street accepted the new tenant the way a root accepts a graft: without ceremony and with immediate, invisible adjustment. The maple already carried one machine; the application to affix another was approved under the code TS-P/W 4 (VAC), the paint mark still legible at the base. Chet offered velvet linings for the moving boxes. Lance described the Kenduskeag as once navigable by craft larger than any current vessel. Ken left a radio without its back panel. Terence stayed four hours and said nothing that required reply. Big Dorothy continued her winter under the sixty-watt bulb, the microcomputer in the maple crotch printing whatever arrived.

The velvet forewoman passed once, dance-walking from the wrong direction, and left the sentence about the coat on the hook that was not a coat and should not be filed. The sentence was perceived and left unattributed. No later movement was permitted to cite it as origin. The tree accepted the second machine the way the piling had accepted the first: strap, non-penetrating, load fourteen pounds, no questions asked about purpose.

MOVEMENT III — THE TOCCATA OF ACCUMULATED EVIDENCE

The poly camera obscura took nine months and less money than the first car. Four channels entered the dark chamber; only the micro-detail where any two agreed survived on the emulsion. The film refused clean signals. It held only the accidental consensus, and each consensus carried the unrepeatable chemistry of its particular collision. Terence and Ken produced one note; Terence and Ansonia

produced another, even on the same hubcap. The symphonic text treatment accepted the same rule: multiple contributors, real arrangements, rehearsal discipline aimed at output that could not be mistaken for any single engineering decision.

The laminated schedule inside the lid already contained the procedure for the impossible: log any entry that arrived with no contributors present; do not erase. Someone had prepared for the instrument's interior before the interior existed. The trainee's badge registered at 6:12 through a door reported inoperable that day. The work-study timesheet showed unpaid balance and no forwarding address. The mites entered the emulsion from the processing layer and were left in place. The instrument now carried its own residue, hand-painted matter and a voice without speaker tag, arriving on days when the panel was under ice and no one walked Fern Street.

MOVEMENT IV — COUNTERPOINT WITHOUT TRAPDOORS

Pruitt read four hundred entries and recommended recalibration. Arlene Bouchard kept the other record on the backs of oil slips, noting clicks that occurred with no one present. Terence described the refusal of solitary meaning. Ken said the broken radio suited the machine. The librarian noted only that the quarterly arrivals had exhausted the correct archival box. Two catalog entries existed for the same output in buildings four miles apart, one marked instrument artifact and restricted, the other accessioned, cataloged, mended. Neither institution claimed ownership. The contradictory institutions preserved different portions of the same anatomy without reconciliation.

The trainee remained owed one hundred and eighteen dollars. The door that did

not open had nevertheless recorded the badge. The emulsion continued to accept entries generated from its own embedded material. These arrived short, unlike the collision records, on dates when the weather report showed calm and the power budget was zero. The log required only the date and the word ice.

MOVEMENT V — PROTECTED RETURN

F.F.R. 19 appeared in the spring, printed badly because the Opus could not be printed any other way. Chet lined the archival copy in false velvet without being asked. Lance told two people it would appreciate. Ansonia returned to Stonington for a week in February. While she was gone the machine clicked on a Wednesday with no one present and the panel under ice. Arlene wrote it on the back of an oil slip. Nothing overturned. The trainee stayed missing, the reconditioning note stayed blank, the

paint mark stayed legible, the stain on the porch stayed a stain, the footbridge kept its name whose origin no one on Fern Street could supply, the woman in the raincoat holding the crate remained unidentified.

What changed was only that the first movement could now be heard through the later ones. The schedule that had once measured only the reach now measured the conditions under which any instrument begins to record itself. The forewoman continued past the maple and the paint mark and the velvet-lined box, unattributed, dance-walking, owing the architecture nothing.

Concerning a certain person clad entirely as a hot dog, who set out from Bangor for the festival at Dexter, and of the diverse things which befell him upon the road.

Deo adiuvat et mustardia

Thus was the mission preserved. Many who were present afterwards affirmed that never had they seen a hot dog so quietly charging itself.

Concerning a Certain Person Clad Entirely as a Hot Dog, Who Set Out from Bangor for the Festival at Dexter, and of the Diverse Things Which Befell Him Upon the Road.

By Rufus of Veazie

In these days there happened in the country of Maine an occurrence which many persons judged remarkable, although it concerned neither princes nor captains of war, but only a certain honest fellow who had conceived in his heart that he would ride by means of an electric bicycle unto the assembly called the Red Hot Dog Festival.

And because he desired that all men should understand the purpose of his voyage without inquiry, he clothed himself wholly in the likeness of a hot dog, having a body of scarlet sausage enclosed in a yellow bun, with mustard represented upon the upper part after the customary fashion.

This equipment was regarded by some as foolishness, yet by others as a token of singular constancy, for no man thereafter mistook the object of his pilgrimage.

He departed from Bangor while the morning was still cool, and many who saw him pass delayed their own business to behold him; some removed their hats, children pointed after him with exceeding joy, and several dogs barked in earnest, though whether from alarm or admiration could not afterwards be determined.

Now the road toward Dexter is not without hills, against which even an electric bicycle must contend after the manner appointed unto all earthly things. Therefore the rider moderated his speed, preserving the strength of his battery, for he knew that zeal without prudence often leaves a traveller many miles from his destination.

When he had come near unto Corinth, which lieth about midway, he perceived that the charge remaining in his machine was less than had been hoped. Whereupon he

sought no miracle, but rather an ordinary wall socket, believing rightly that Providence frequently disguiseth itself as common electricity.

He came unto a place where victuals and drink were sold, and standing before the keeper in all his hot-dog apparel, made humble request, saying only that he desired leave to replenish his battery.

The keeper, having looked upon him for a short space, answered:

"You may plug in over there."

Thus was the mission preserved.

Many who were present afterwards affirmed that never had they seen a hot dog so quietly charging itself.

After a convenient time had passed, the traveller rendered thanks, purchased refreshment according to his means, and resumed the road. The children who had gathered there

saluted him as though he had been some knight errant, while an elderly man declared that in all his years he had witnessed stranger things, yet could recall none better.

And so the Hot Dog rode onward toward Dexter.

For it hath long been observed that there are journeys undertaken for necessity, others for profit, and a very few which are undertaken merely because the world is made happier by their being attempted.

Of this last sort was the expedition of the Hot Dog of Bangor.

THE PANOPTICON INSTITUTE *for* RECURSIVE INQUIRY

(FOWL FEATHERED REVIEW / BACKPAGE BROADSIDE EDITION / VOL. IX: THE BUREAU OF ERRANT KNOWLEDGE)

BEHOLD THE CURIOUS CALLING OF ERRANT SCHOLARS, DREAMERS, AND UNREGISTERED THINKERS!
A MARVEL OF MODERN ARCANA DISGUISED AS AN INSTITUTE OF LEARNING!

HEY—YOU—YES YOU WITH THE THINKING FACE AND THE QUESTIONABLE FUTURE—
step forth, step sideways, step entirely out of sequence—
the **PANOPTICON INSTITUTE FOR RECURSIVE INQUIRY** is now enrolling, unenrolling, re-enrolling, and generally

confounding the very ledgers of destiny itself in a low-ceiling civic zone between a defunct department store, a reflexology parlor of uncertain doctrine, and a vending machine that occasionally produces annotations instead of snacks.

🔊 HEAR THE ANNOUNCEMENT IN TRIPLICATE, WRITTEN IN SNOW AND STATIC:

"We got knowledge so deep it requires a snorkel, a ladder, and a provisional understanding of your own biography!"

"HERE COMES THE JUDGE—AND HE HAS NOT YET DECIDED WHETHER YOU ARE A QUESTION OR A DOCUMENT!"

"THE SYLLABUS WAS LAST SEEN NEGOTIATING ITS OWN LEGIBILITY IN A CORRIDOR OF UNSTABLE LIGHTING!"

⚠ STEP FORTH, SEEKER OF PECULIAR WISDOM! ⚠

FOR HERE ARE OFFERED:

diplomas that precede their instruction
lectures delivered in fractured continental weather patterns
metaphysics served in chipped institutional porcelain
accreditation so irregular it circles back into legitimacy by misadventure

CALL NOW—OR DO NOT—THE TELEPHONE IS ALREADY RECORDING YOUR INTENTIONS IN DUPLICATE.

A Most Extraordinary And Somewhat Forbidden Treatise Upon Wandering Signifiers, Being Also A Fluxus Instruction Set, Crackpot Alchemical Tablet, and Educational Relic of The Lower Halls

☩ Article I — Of Drunken Signification and The Staggering Letter

Wherein It Is Proved That Meaning Moves Like A Disbanded Regiment Through Rain

The signifier no longer points.
It stumbles.
It reels through language like a tired herald who has forgotten which kingdom he serves.
Meaning is not delivered.
It is spilled.

☩ Article II — Of The Low Institutes of Broken Halls and Improvised Learning Wherein Education Occurs Without Permission or Stability

Education is not transmitted.
It is:
shouted through cracked brass speaking horns
written on the reverse of expired municipal forms
whispered by instructors who may themselves be misunderstandings
The classroom is wherever attention refuses to remain seated.

☩ Article III — Of Crackpot Alchemy Most High and Questionable Declaration of Transmutation By Error and Persistent Misreading

All substances are symbolic until they misbehave.
All symbols are material until they collapse under their own enthusiasm.
Gold is what happens when:
failure persists long enough to be mistaken for method
method forgets its function and becomes decorative
decoration begins issuing instructions

☩ Article IV — Of Fluxus Instruction Most Radical And Unauthorized Command for Performative Disassembly of Text and Object

Take heed:
cut the text into fragments

rearrange without consultation
affix fragments to a radiator or other warm
bureaucratic surface
allow weather to annotate the result
declare it an examination artifact

☩ Article V — Of The Mirror That Refuses To Stay Still

Note On The Subject as Misfiled Echo in Administrative Space

The subject is:
a clerical error that learned to speak in complete sentences.
Desire is:
paperwork missing its explanation
corridors reflecting themselves incorrectly
diplomas that already exist but await recognition

NOSCE TE IPSUM, MISREAD IT WELL.

ERRARE HUMANUM, PERSISTERE MAGISTERIUM.

THE

PANOPTICON INSTITUTE FOR RECURSIVE INQUIRY

BUREAU OF ERRANT KNOWLEDGE & IMPROBABLE CERTIFICATION

PERAMBULA, ERRA, RIDE, RUMINA.

SAPIENTIA NON CAPTUR. SED COLLIGITUR.

DISCIPULUS ERRATICUS, MAGISTER NULLIUS.

LINGUA EST LABYRINTHUS.

TESTIMONIUM MIRABILIS ET ERRATICUM

BE IT KNOWN THROUGHOUT ALL QUIET CORRIDORS,
UNSTABLE HALLS, AND UNREGISTERED STUDY ZONES:

THAT THE BEARER HEREIN NAMED

YOUR NAME HERE

HATH PASSED THROUGH THE THREE-FOLD STRANGE EXAMINATION:

THE ADVERTISEMENT MOST DELIRIOUS | THE MANIFESTO MOST FRACTURED | THE OBJECT MOST IMPROBABLE

FIELD OF STRANGE STUDIES

- ☐ Minor Arcana Bureaucratic Distortion
- ☐ Linguistic Drift and Skaldic Compression Arts
- ☐ Applied Vaudeville Ontology
- ☐ Fluxus Instructional Disassembly Practice
- ☐ Crackpot Alchemical Reasoning (Unregulated but Functional)
- ☐ Diner Semiotics & Jukebox Cosmology

METHOD OF CERTIFICATION

INSTITUTUM ERRATICUM

By means of:

- sustained misreading of unstable instruction fields
- extraction of coherence from contradictory text masses
- recognition of hidden instruction beneath apparent nonsense
- endurance of semantic turbulence without withdrawal
- acceptance of humor at structurally inappropriate moments

LITTERA FUGIT SENSUS MANET

DECLARATION OF AUTHORITY

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